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SUBJECT: TURKEY: NSC SECGEN ON TURKISH HEZBOLLAH AND CYPRUS

REF: ANKARA 875

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During an April 13 meeting to discuss CHOD Buyukanit's April 12 press conference (reftel) and the April 10 NSC meeting, outgoing NSC SecGen Yigit Alpogan advised Ambassador that Turkish Hezbollah could overtake PKK as the most serious security threat to Turkey and expressed pessimism about any progress on Cyprus until after Greek elections in 2008.

#### TURKISH HEZBOLLAH A GROWING THREAT

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¶2. (C) Turkey is witnessing renewed activity by Turkish Hezbollah, which had been dormant since a military crackdown in the 1990s, stated Alpogan. Unlike the PKK, Hezbollah is employing a "hearts and minds" campaign in the Turkish east, not threats and violence, to win recruits and sympathizers. This strategy could make it more successful than the PKK terrorist group. Hezbollah is opening free health clinics, distributing food and doing other humanitarian work. The aim of the group is to create a "Kurdish-Islamist synthesis." The "Islamist" aspect is of the greatest concern to the Turkish authorities, who fear that this provides an opening for influence by other extremist Islamic organizations, according to Alpogan. Their funding appears to come entirely from small, legal, businesses such as butchers and grocers in eastern provinces such as Bingol and Siirt. He said there is still no known connection between Hezbollah and the organization in Lebanon.

¶3. (C) Alpogan stated that the NSC raised the growing influence of Turkish Hezbollah at the April 10 meeting to increase the awareness of all Turkish security organizations. No decision was taken for any specific action but the group will be more closely monitored.

#### PROGRESS ON CYPRUS UNLIKELY IN 2007

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¶4. (C) Given Turkey's May presidential and fall parliamentary elections and Greek elections expected by/before spring 2008, Alpogan was not optimistic that any progress would be made on the Cyprus issue over the coming year. The July 8 initiative is "dead on technicalities," according to Alpogan. The two sides have a different understanding of the technical committees and working groups and the kinds of issues that each can take up. Alpogan pointed the finger at Papadopoulos who, he said, is using the cover of the EU against Turkey.

Alpogan welcomed the appointment of Lynn Pascoe as UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs. If something

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positive can be done, he said, Pascoe can be very helpful given his prior knowledge of the issues.

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